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Press Release- Alignment Collaborative for Education Launch Breakfast

Elgin- On Wednesday, February 4, 2015, Alignment Collaborative for Education (ACE) will be officially launched at an 8:00 a.m. breakfast meeting hosted at Villa Olivia in Bartlett. Approximately 150 people attending the breakfast represent the many partners from business, government, social services, not-for-profits, service clubs and community leaders who have an interest in the future of education in our public schools.

Many of the invitees attended the Mayor's Education Summit in May of 2013, where they first heard of the Alignment model from Laurie Preece, then Executive Director of Alignment Rockford. From that event, a partnership of community leaders, including School Districts U-46 and 301, Elgin Community College, Judson University, City of Elgin, United Way of Elgin, the Grand Victoria Foundation began working to establish a local Alignment organization which would serve the U-46 and 301 public schools.

With financial support from the key partner organizations, consulting services began with Alignment USA in late summer of 2014. Alignment representatives have guided and overseen the efforts of the local organization in establishing the Alignment Collaborative for Education, or ACE.

The mission of the organization is to "Align community resources in support of public school strategies to raise student achievement, improve the health and happiness of our children, create responsible, productive and contributing members of our society, and advance the economic and social well-being of our community."

Linda Deering, President of Advocate Sherman Hospital will serve as the Chairman of the Governing Board of ACE. "I am honored to serve as the Chairman of Alignment Collaborative for Education. We have over 35 business and community leaders committed to serve on the Governing Board to help guide the work of the organization, and over 20 community leaders identified thus far to serve on the Operating Board. I am excited at the prospect of creating a process by which all of our community partners can organize their work around the key local educational issues in a very structured and measured manner."

Alignment committees, or A-Teams, will be structured to address specific issues identified by the local schools. U-46 and 301 quickly identified three initial A-

Teams – Early Education; Dropout Prevention/Credit Recovery; and Career and Technical Education. The committees will not be made up of only subject matter experts. Others in the community who can bring an array of expertise, skills and resources to the table will be asked to serve. They will be chaired by a school administrator and co-chaired by a community member.

Dr. Todd Stirn, Superintendent of District 301 is not looking for immediate results. “These are complex problems that don’t have simple or quick answers. They will require our community to align their efforts both inside and outside the classroom and be committed to making generational change, not just quick fixes.”

Tony Sanders, CEO of District U-46, offered an example of why these committees are so important. “In the 2013-14 school year, we lost 240 students to drop out. We don’t hear a lot of concern in the community about that, but if we lost a plane full of that many people *each year*, there would be outrage and shock in the community. Our community would immediately come together to try to find a solution. We need the same level of concern and sense of urgency about losing 240 students who drop out of school each year.”

Alignment began in Nashville through the Nashville Chamber of Commerce in the early 2000’s, and has won national attention for the significant impact to their public school’s key issues, including graduation rates and teen pregnancy. The Alignment model has been adopted by over 10 cities and counties throughout the United States in recent years. Alignment Rockford, which began in 2009, has already seen measurable results, and, in fact, was just named a Ford Next Generation Community for their efforts.

Carol Gieske, President of the Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce, is a member of the ACE Governing Board and understands the importance this has for the overall business community. “A trained workforce is critical to fill the growing number of positions open at our local businesses, and key in attracting new businesses to our community. We look forward to being a part of the Alignment Collaborative for Education.”

To get involved with Alignment Collaborative for Education, a website is available at www.Align4Ed.org that provides more information. Individuals can sign on to become a user, and organizations can register. For more information, call 847-931-5667.